
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

SSB 5447

Brief Description: Regarding the coastal Dungeness crab fishery.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Hatfield, Jacobsen, Honeyford, Hargrove, Poulsen, Benton and Rasmussen).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to design a voluntary buyback program for the commercial coastal Dungeness crab fishery.

Hearing Date: 3/21/07

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Dungeness crab exists in commercial quantities from Alaska to central California and live in waters from the intertidal zone out to a depth of 170 meters. Washington has bifurcated its Dungeness crab resource into two commercial fisheries: Puget Sound and coastal waters.

Unlike many coastal fisheries which are operated under federal management plans, Congress has authorized Washington, Oregon, and California to manage, with some limitations, the coastal crab fishery in federal waters.

The Legislature and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) have taken measures to limit the growth of the coastal fishery, including limiting entry into the fishery, imposing limitations on the number of pots that may be fished, limiting vessel size and transfers, and pursuing interstate agreements.

Summary of Bill:

The WDFW is directed to design a voluntary buyback program for the commercial coastal Dungeness crab fishery. The developed buyback program will serve as a recommended program,

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and implementation of the program may not occur until the WDFW is further directed to begin implementation by the Legislature. A report detailing the proposed buyback program must be delivered by December 1, 2007.

The buyback program must be developed with participation from the commercial fleet, and must have as a goal the purchase of between 80 and 100 Dungeness crab-coastal fishery licenses. The recommended program must envision the administrative provisions of the program, any conditions that may be set on the buyback of licenses, and possible funding sources of the license buyback program. The program that is designed must have a neutral impact on crab harvests in Oregon and California's coastal waters.

The WDFW may contract with individuals not employed by the state to assist with developing the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.